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War Hysteria and Second Thoughts ★ R.P.D.

Far-sighted Militants ★ John Baird, M.P.

Background to the Tory Squeeze ★ John Eaton

The Suez Question ★ Quæstor

East of Suez ★ Ajoy Ghosh

Shaw and the Soviet Union ★ R. Page Arnot

Letters from Mrs. Marx

September 1956

One Shilling and Sixpence

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A LONG ROAD

WHAT Press Lord dare remind the young Midlands engineer, the young South Wales miner, the young Scottish railwayman of the rich tradition for struggle of his forefathers? None —for the young trade unionist would learn from it the confidence, inspiration and lessons of unity which he needs to apply to the struggles of today. So they won't feature in press or any television programme on September 15 the moving ceremony which took place on Primrose Hill exactly a hundred years ago. It was a gathering of Chartists—that 'first working men's party which the world ever produced', as Engels called it. They met to welcome a seventy-five year old Welshman, who had just made the long journey back from sixteen years' transportation. For John Frost, with two others, had been condemned to death in January, 1840, for their part in the Chartist 'Newport Rising' of Welsh miners. To the poet Wordsworth's vexation the Cabinet was forced to commute the death sentences to transportation for life. But it had taken 16 years of dogged campaigning by the Chartists to win his release. In the speech for which the Chartist leader, Ernest Jones, had himself been jailed for two years in 1848, he had demanded that Frost be brought back from exile and that the Home Secretary should be transported in his place. This Jones promptly repeated when released in 1850. Finally, with the end of the Crimean war, the Chartists were successful. Now Frost had been amnestied and he had come home—back to life. There may be Londoners now living who have heard their grand-parents describe the presentation of that Address to John Frost on what the wife of Karl Marx called 'pretty Primrose Hill' near 'romantic Hampstead Heath.' I don't know the names of those present; but no doubt those stirring facts were recalled much as they were described years later in the 'Revolutionary Calendar' of William Morris' *Commonweal*, in 1888: 'About 10,000 Chartists from the neighbouring mines, armed with pikes, etc., arrived at Newport, November 4, 1839. They divided into two bodies; one, under the command of Mr. Jno. Frost, an ex-magistrate, proceeded down the principal street; the other, headed by his son, took the direction of Stow Hill. They met in front of the Westgate Hotel, where the magistrates were with part of the 45th regiment and some special constables.' The 10th Hussars arrived. There was firing, the dead and wounded lay in the street. Frost and 124 others were arrested and put on trial. But three weeks before their trial began, we find the young Queen Victoria writing to her German princeling husband: 'Today I knighted the Mayor of Newport (who distinguished himself so much in *that riot of the Chartists*); he is a very timid, modest man and was very happy when I told him orally

(*Continued on page iii of cover*)

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Vol. XXXVIII, No. 9 CONTENTS September, 1956

NOTES OF THE MONTH: War Hysteria and Second Thoughts, by R.P.D. 385
THE FAR-SIGHTED MILITANTS, by John Baird, M.P. 399
BACKGROUND TO THE TORY SQUEEZE, by John Eaton 401
THE SUEZ QUESTION, by Quæstor 411
EAST OF SUEZ, by Ajoy Ghosh 418
SHAW AND THE SOVIET UNION, by R. Page Arnot 421
LETTERS FROM MRS. MARX, II 429
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO 417
FULFILLED AHEAD OF TIME (Cartoon) 408-409

Notes of the Month

War Hysteria and Second Thoughts

'The gravest crisis that any of us have had to face since the second world war'.

Sir ANTHONY EDEN, at the opening of the London Conference on Suez, August 16, 1956.

Whereas . . . in case of imminent national danger or great emergency.

QUEEN'S PROCLAMATION, August 3, 1956.

LIKE a flash the Suez crisis has illuminated the outlines of the new world situation and its significance for Britain. It would be premature, in comments written while the London Conference was still in session, to assume the outcome or draw any immediate conclusion that the menace of a military clash with incalculable consequences has passed. So long as Anglo-French policy maintains its claim to the right, in accordance with the tradition of three quarters of a century, to impose a settlement on Egypt by superior force, overriding Egyptian national sovereignty —and that claim has not yet been abandoned—and so long as the troops, the warships and the bombers are concentrated around

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Egypt with the obvious and openly proclaimed threat of such pressure or action to impose such a settlement acceptable to the Western powers and unacceptable to Egypt, the menace of war remains. Even if the military measures carried an element of bluff, bluff is a dangerous game. The bluff may be called. The guns may go off. The explosive situation may explode.

Second Thoughts

But there is no doubt that the initial bellicose threats and military measures of the British and French Governments have alarmed opinion throughout the world, and not least in Britain and France. There is no doubt that the majority of the world stands by Egypt's rights in this matter. Eden and Pineau have raised a hornet's nest about them. Second thoughts have begun in Britain, including in the leading circles of the Labour Party. There are grounds for some hope that a reasonable negotiated settlement, compatible with Egyptian national sovereignty and the rights of free transit, can be reached on what is pre-eminently a negotiable issue. Such a development is throwing a powerful light on the changed balance of the world situation. It carries profound lessons for Britain, for British Toryism, and above all, for the British Labour movement and the future of the British people.

Beyond Suez

In accompanying articles in this number by our Diplomatic Correspondent, and by Ajoy Ghosh, Secretary of the Indian Communist Party, the issues of this Suez crisis are discussed. It is not proposed here to examine further these issues, whether the background of the past imperialist domination of Egypt and the record of the Suez Canal Company, or the rights and wrongs of the present controversy with regard to the nationalisation of the Canal and the adequate fulfilment of international obligations for the rights of free transit. The record is sufficiently damning with regard to every one of the claims now presented by the Western Powers, whether in respect of the construction of the Canal and the exploitation of the Egyptian people for the profits of Anglo-French High Finance, the international commitments concerning the Canal, which were resisted by Britain while Britain held power and insisted on sole control, stonewalling every proposal for international control, or the open violation of those international commitments in wartime so long as Britain held power. If the question were merely a question of international law for a law court,

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the British and French Governments and the Company would not have a leg to stand on; and it was indeed their awareness of this which underlay their precipitate recourse to military measures to appeal to the power of the sword as the supreme arbiter. But it is here that the new and wider questions have arisen. The issues of the Suez crisis go far beyond Suez. They have not only aroused the attention and concern of the entire world. They are revealing the new alignment of the modern world situation which is knocking all the old-style calculations of Western imperialism in general, and especially of British imperialism and the traditional Labour imperialism, into a cocked hat, and compelling the beginning of some real new thinking. It is with this wider aspect of the new international situation revealed by Suez that we are here concerned.

A New World is Rising

During the recent period we have repeatedly called attention to the new balance of the world which has arisen, and which the statesmen of the West, accustomed to their centuries-old supremacy, are still reluctant to recognise. The Western imperialists are no longer lords and masters of the world. They have now become visibly a minority sector, still formidable in resources and armaments, but no longer able to impose their will at pleasure. The majority of the peoples of the world are moving away from them to new horizons, remote from imperialism. The advancing economic and peaceful strength, combined with strategic equality of the socialist world, has ended for ever the old predominance of Western imperialism. This has in turn made possible the rise of the new world of national liberation, the emergence of the majority of the earth's inhabitants from their former colonial and semi-colonial slavery to establish their own independent states, begin to build their own economy and refuse to obey the orders of their former masters. The world of socialism and national liberation, resolutely opposed to every form of colonialism, equally to the old forms of direct domination or to the new methods through economic intervention and military pacts, is now the majority sector of the world. The former masters have now to negotiate with the newly independent nations as equals in place of laying down the law in the old high-handed fashion. This is the new situation to which the antiquated statesmen of the West, the Edens and Pineaus and Gaitskells, the Templers and Morrisons, have failed to reconcile themselves. Failure to recognise this new situation has

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already led them, and is further leading them, to perilous consequences.

From Korea to Suez

Up to the war in Korea the Western warlords still regarded themselves as the natural rulers of the world and supreme over the two-thirds of the world which still remained within their orbit. It is true that they had ruefully to admit the existence of the socialist third of the world; but they refused to recognise its permanence. China was refused admittance to the United Nations; the aim to reconquer China by military force was openly proclaimed by the principal Western power, as also the aim to 'liberate' Eastern Europe; while the ring of military alliances, bases and economic blockade established around the Soviet Union in the name of the 'cold war' was no less openly proclaimed by its principal sponsors (as in the famous 'X' article of Kennan at that time) to have as its objective to bring about the downfall of the Soviet règime. But the world situation has moved differently from these calculations. Within three years of the defeat of the Western invasion of Korea the nationalisation of the Suez Canal is now revealing the new international situation.

Three Years of Accelerating Change

It was not the Chinese People's Republic that weakened before the Western threats of invasion, but Chiang's forces that are now ageing and mouldering in disillusionment behind the American naval guns. The combined Western imperialist invasion of Korea ended in defeat and the recognition of the Korean People's Republic. The Western military operations in South East Asia ended in defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the recognition of the Vietnam People's Republic. The Indian Republic has swept forward in the forefront of progressive nations in the cause of world peace, with cordial co-operation with the Soviet Union and China, and open opposition to the war pacts of imperialism; and at the same time has entered on bold programmes of national economic reconstruction, with socialist aid, through the Second Five Year Plan which has received the public censure of the American-controlled World Bank.

The Ever-Changing Orient

The Middle East and the whole Arab world has arisen. Egypt, Sudan, Morocco and Tunis have won their independence, alongside

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Syria and Lebanon and Arabia. Jordan has defied Templer and expelled Glubb, the 'uncrowned king' maintained by Britain for a quarter of a century. Bahrein has expelled Redgrave, the British 'Adviser' for thirty years. Libya has refused to permit the stationing of additional British troops aimed against Egypt. The Baghdad Pact has flopped, winning no Arab State save Iraq under Nuri, and even Iraq has now supported Egypt over Suez. The Bandung Afro-Asian Conference last year awakened the first general realisation of the new world that had arisen, when the representatives of states embracing the majority of mankind met independently of imperialism, and proclaimed their common aims for peace, against colonialism and against the economic and military interventionist strategies of imperialism. In the wake of Bandung followed the Geneva Conference of Heads of State, proclaiming the official suspension of the cold war and the aim of peaceful co-existence. Now Suez is providing the first major test of the readiness of international diplomacy to recognise the new international alignment.

A National Revolution

When the people of Iran nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company monopoly of the Iranian oil industry, the threatened British military and naval action (under a Labour Government) to maintain forcible possession of Abadan could not be carried through, partly on account of American refusal to co-operate. But it was still subsequently found possible through the military coup of General Zahedi to restore for a time the essence of Western imperialist control and exploitation in the form of the new Anglo-American consortium for the operation of the 'nationalised' oil industry. Today, when Egypt has nationalised the Suez Canal Company (legally a registered Egyptian company whose nationalisation remains unchallengeable in law) the same methods could not be so easily attempted. The national military revolution led by Colonel Nasser and his fellow officers, which drove out the corrupt British-supported King Farouk and court clique of big feudal landowners, while it has not yet developed a democratic basis, has the fullest popular support for its stand against imperialism, and has in this sense evolved in a progressive direction in the new world situation symbolised by Bandung. Hence the British and French Governments, unable to disrupt the unity of the Egyptian people on this issue, felt themselves compelled to mobilise British and French military forces.

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Last Days of Gunboat Diplomacy

But these military measures at once aroused the widest world opposition. The largest states in the world, China, India and the Soviet Union proclaimed support for Egypt's national rights and condemned the Anglo-French military measures. The Arab League stood by Egypt. All Asia and Africa was aroused. Even the United States shrank from association with the Anglo-French military gamble. Faced with the menace of isolation, the British and French rulers found themselves compelled to begin to draw in their horns, and to explain that their military measures were 'merely precautionary'. The situation remains tense, and the outcome critical, so long as the British and French Governments adhere to their claim to impose the type of settlement they desire by force, if it is not accepted by Egypt. But the experience of these last few weeks has begun to make clear to all that the days of gunboat diplomacy are drawing to their close.

Lament for Vanished Glories

In a melancholy article the *Daily Herald* on August 1 tried to explain some of the new facts of life to its readers:

> Almost any change that affects Britain anywhere in the world is bound to be for the worse.
>
> That seems to be one of the facts of life we must learn to live with.
>
> And the reason is that for a century we occupied an amazingly privileged position. We were the Great Power of the world, and the answer to trouble was simple: Send a gunboat.

Alternatively, it might be added to fill out the picture of those old days: Send a Brigade of the Indian Army and charge it to the Indian Exchequer. But now, the writer explains, the colonial peoples have arisen:

> The great mass of illiterate under-nourished frightened people of the backward countries have become politically articulate.
>
> The first expression of this political awareness takes the form of nationalism. It is the beginning of revolution.

'Nationalism gone mad' is how this Labour Party organ describes the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry under Moussadeq. Against this menace of 'nationalism' in the Middle East, found to be comparable to Hitler, the *Daily Herald* has firmly exhorted its readers to stand up for 'British' interests, and has chided the Communist Party—which declared military intervention against other nations to be contrary to the interests of the British people—

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as 'anti-British'. But the *Daily Herald* writer ruefully concludes:

> We can no longer look at an Admiralty map and say: Send a gunboat.

Not for lack of trying, as the experience of Abadan revealed.

Writing on the Wall

The Labour Party in general, and Mr. Morrison in particular, ought to have learned something from the bitter experience of Abadan, to exercise a little more caution when the Suez crisis arose. For in 1951 the Labour Government, with Mr. Morrison as Foreign Secretary, sought to meet the situation arising from the nationalisation of the oil industry in Iran by the most blood-curdling military measures and threats. The *Daily Herald* was in the forefront in whipping up jingo war hysteria and threatening the Iranian people, for their crime of nationalisation, with the Big Stick of superior military power to bring them to heel. In language reminiscent of the similar outbursts at the beginning of the Suez crisis the *Daily Herald* screamed on August 23, 1951, just five years ago:

> Britain is not getting out of Abadan, the great island refinery, king-pin of the oil industry. Mr. Attlee has already made that clear in Parliament. And the Cabinet has seen to it that warships and other forces are ready to protect the British staff in charge.
>
> The 5,770-ton cruiser *Euryalus* lies off Abadan. Alongside her are four destroyers and two sloops. More warships can be sent from Malta and Ceylon, if needed.
>
> The Royal Air Force, too, has important bases in Iraq, Egypt, the Persian Gulf and Transjordan.

But they had to withdraw from Abadan all the same. Has the lesson been learned? Not yet, to judge from the recrudescence of Mr. Morrison and the *Daily Herald* in the first stage of the Suez crisis.

War Hysteria

It is necessary to recall and place on record the senseless and reckless bellicose language and military threats of British official and semi-official utterance, including official Labour Party utterance (undoubtedly not representative of the Labour movement, as events soon showed) at the outset of the Suez crisis. For today, when the realities of the international situation have begun to bring some sobering reflections, every attempt is being made to gloss over the initial hysteria under cover of mild and deprecatory explanations. But the revelation of the initial bipartisan chorus, and exultant applause for the military measures taken, as soon as the nationalisation of the Suez Canal was announced, was a very important demonstration of how deep the danger of jingoism still remains beneath all the talk of the 'end of colonialism'. Today the major press organs and official spokesmen are endeavouring in varying

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degree to eat their words and ignore or explain away their previous utterances at the outset, when the Communist Party and the *Daily Worker* (together with the *Manchester Guardian* in this case) were almost alone in voicing the viewpoint of sanity which has now begun to be more widely accepted. But the experience has shown how easily a spark can light a conflagration (the danger is not yet past): and the progressive movement needs to learn the lesson, including—not least in importance—the irreplaceable rôle of the Communist Party and its daily organ as the only independent voice to express promptly the true interests of the labour movement and the people in a moment of dangerous crisis.

Bellicose Chorus.

When Sir Anthony Eden in his broadcast compared Nasser to Hitler, and denounced him as a man with whom no negotiated agreement was worth the paper it was written on, that was language of war. The comparison with Hitler might appear inapposite for the spokesmen of a Great Power engaged in dispatching troops, warships and bombers to threaten a smaller and weakly armed nation two thousand miles away; but since it was precisely the practice of Hitler to accompany such measures and threats against neighbouring smaller nations with intemperate abuse of its rulers, the comparison may have had a certain appropriateness, although not in the sense intended by Sir Anthony. The cry of 'Hitler'—a war cry if ever there was one—became the reiterated keynote of the campaign. 'No More Adolf Hitlers!' shrieked the *Daily Herald* across three columns on July 28:

> Colonel Nasser is acting like Hitler in the Middle East. He thinks he can tear up international agreements. . . . There is no room for appeasement.

What international agreements Egypt had violated by nationalisation and the pledge to uphold the 1888 Convention the organ did not deign to specify; since it later had to be admitted that these actions constituted no violation of any agreement. This did not prevent *Picture Post* coming out with a front page depicting 'A Scrap of Paper'—the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, the very small type on which might have been deciphered by the inquiring reader to reveal that 'the two contracting Governments agree that the Suez Canal is an integral part of Egypt'. Similarly, the other Liberal-Labour press organs in the early stages:

> We use force if Nasser says No. (*Daily Mirror*, August 3.)
>
> The British Government will be fully justified in taking retaliatory action. (*News Chronicle*, July 28.).

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The ponderous *Times,* after the obligatory reference to Hitler, proceeded to warn against 'quibbling' over legality, or allowing delay for international conferences to stand in the way of 'the strongest action':

> Quibbling over whether or not he was 'legally entitled' to make the grab will delight the finicky and comfort the faint-hearted, but entirely misses the real issues. . . .
>
> The first instinct last week-end was to take the strongest action to ensure that the canal was in proper hands, and that instinct was right; but time is passing, and consultations are going on, and now the idea seems to be growing of calling a conference of the chiefly interested powers. It might have been better to have had a foot in the door first.
>
> (*The Times,* August 1.)

A subsequent letter was prominently printed on its editorial page declaring that 'the legal case against Colonel Nasser may be weak', but 'legality has been known to kill'. In short, to hell with legality, and on with 'the strongest action'. Such was the debauch before the morning after.

Mr. Gaitskell's Speech

What of Mr. Gaitskell's speech in the House of Commons on August 2? The subsequent wiser second thoughts of the Shadow Cabinet endeavoured to correct the disastrous effect of this speech by 'endorsing' it in the form of emphasising the ambiguously vague safeguarding references to the United Nations. But in reality these references in no respect cancelled out the main support of the Government's military measures and threats of unilateral military action. He said:

> Obviously, there are circumstances in which we might be compelled to use force, in self-defence or as part of some collective defence measures. I do not myself object to the precautionary steps announced by the Prime Minister. . . . While force cannot be excluded, we must be sure that the circumstances justify it and that it is, if used, consistent with our belief in and our pledges to the Charter of the United Nations and not in conflict with them.

The meaning of this is unmistakable. It is not declared that any use of military force over this issue by Britain or Britain and France, without the authorisation of the United Nations, would be illegal. On the contrary, what is contemplated is not military action authorised by the United Nations, but military action in the name of 'self-defence' or 'collective defence' (the same plea as with the Atlantic Treaty). Then the pious addition is thrown in that such action must be, *not* 'authorised by the United Nations', but just subjectively 'consistent with our belief in and pledges to the

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United Nations'. As if any British Government embarking on military action would ever declare that its action was anything else.

Full-Blooded Imperialism

It was not for this pious face-saving reference to the United Nations that the Tory Diehards of the Suez Group vociferously applauded Gaitskell's speech. It was because he joined in the same violent denunciation of Nasser in terms of Hitler and Mussolini ('It is exactly the same that we encountered from Hitler and Mussolini'). It was because he declared that the real issue is 'the struggle for the mastery of the Middle East'. A revealing phrase from the apostle of the 'end of colonialism' ('We must remove from our policy, our administration and our activities every possible taint of colonialism', Gaitskell in the House of Commons on July 24, 1956). Struggle between whom? Between imperialism and the Middle Eastern peoples for 'mastery' of the Middle East? Or between Britain and the Soviet Union, when the Soviet Union has no troops or bases in the Middle East? The old language of colonialism ('mastery of the Middle East') does not apparently die so easily.

Unity with Toryism

It was because he said that 'the economic measures taken by the Government are fully justified'—although these economic and financial sanctions are almost certainly illegal in international law. It was because he said 'I do not myself object to the precautionary measures announced by the Prime Minister today; I think that any Government would have to do that, as we had to do it during the Persian crisis'. These were the declarations that tied official Labour to the war chariot of Tory imperialism. Thereby Mr. Gaitskell threw away Labour's chance to rally the forces of sanity, sound the note of caution against reckless bellicose threats and warn against the future fiasco. Such a rôle would incidentally have ensured Labour's victory in the coming election; for the revulsion against the war hysteria, when events prove its lack of basis and foresight, will hit hard those responsible.

Mr. Morrison's Addendum

Lest there should be any misunderstanding of the plain meaning of the initial Labour Front Bench unity with Toryism on military action over Suez, as voiced by Mr. Gaitskell, the other leading Labour Party official spokesman, Mr. Morrison, proceeded to dot the i's and cross the t's in the same debate. With the glories of his

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sabre-rattling at Abadan still ringing in his ears, Mr. Morrison said:

> If the Government and France, possibly with the United States, came to the conclusion that the use of force would be justified, it would be the duty of all members and himself to say they would give support (Ministerial cheers).

No reference to the United Nations here. The supposition is not merely of unilateral military action by the three Western powers outside the United Nations. The supposition is of unilateral military action by Britain and France alone, even without the United States. This coincides with the line of Sir Anthony Eden's broadcast when he referred to 'a refusal by some countries at least to live their lives at such a hazard'. Thus Mr. Morrison on behalf of the Labour Party offered a blank cheque to Toryism by his explicit declaration that if the Tory Government and France should decide on military action, quite apart from the United Nations, and even apart from the United States, it would be the 'duty' of labour to support them.

World Opposition

The sequel, however, soon showed how little Messrs. Eden, Lloyd, Gaitskell and Morrison had understood of the living world situation or the changed position of Britain and France in the modern world. It was evident that they were suffering from the illusion that, in dealing with Egypt, they were still living in the days of Disraeli and Gladstone. The outcome soon undeceived them. From every quarter of the world sounded an almost universal condemnation of the Anglo-French military moves and provocation. It was not merely a question of the declarations of the Soviet Union or China or Indonesia or the Arab States. Nehru spoke for world opinion when, on August 8, amid the cheers of the Indian parliament, he sounded the gravest warning on the Anglo-French military measures:

> Threats to settle this dispute or enforce their views in this matter by the display or use of force are the wrong way. It does not belong to this age and it is not dictated by reason. It fails to take into account the world as it is today and the Asia of today. . . . We deeply regret these reactions and the measures reported to have been taken in consequence. We express the hope that they will cease.

On the following day he resumed the warning even more urgently:

> If any effort is made, even by mistake, by any Power to solve this issue through armed force or the use of threats, the result will be disastrous. The problem will not be solved, but it will lead to a conflagration that may spread throughout the world.

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A warning which the Edens and Gaitskells could not afford to ignore. They had to begin to change a little their tune. For the world protest was reinforced by the emergence of a rising protest within Britain, including within the Labour Party.

United States Rôle

No less significant in its own characteristic fashion was the rôle of the United States. All the hopes of the Anglo-French military planners had been based on securing American backing and collaboration. But the United States was not prepared so easily to fall into a rôle allotted it by its junior partners. As over each preceding Middle Eastern crisis, as over Abadan and the evacuation of the Suez Canal zone, the United States has also played a two-fold rôle. On the one hand American policy has in general supported the common interests of imperialism against revolutionary encroachment. On the other hand American policy has not been averse to seeing Britain and France a little further displaced at each turn of the screw, and in the ultimate outcome each time the American share in Middle Eastern affairs and interests a little enlarged. Above all, in face of the manifest world situation, the United States was not disposed to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Britain and be dragged into a reckless military gamble.

'Brink of War' in Reverse

Thus the experience of the Vietnam crisis in 1954, or of the Yalu previously, was reversed. Dulles flew to London to restrain a bellicose Britain. The Three Power communiqué, with its vague references to an 'international system', fell far short of the explicit and peremptory tones Britain had desired and Eden had voiced. American spokesmen boasted that Dulles had prevented a 'war in 24 or 48 hours':

> When Mr. Dulles went to London two weeks ago, he faced this dilemma. There would be war in 24 or 48 hours unless there could be an immediate conference on British terms. So Mr. Dulles decided to buy time by accepting British conditions for the London Conference. He himself would have preferred Rome or Geneva to London.
>
> ('American Ideas on Suez Canal'? *Manchester Guardian*, August 15.)

President Eisenhower warned in terms similar to those of Nehru:

> I can't conceive of military force being a good solution. . . . There is good reason to hope that good sense will prevail. . . . I think a little sober second thinking is going to prevail in a good many quarters.

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Defence Secretary Wilson described the Suez crisis as 'a relatively minor thing'. The *Washington Post* and *New York Times* reported the American military view that, if Britain and France went to war in the Middle East over Suez, the United States would stay out. The problem from the American standpoint was reported as being how to enable Britain and France to climb down gracefully:

> One chief preoccupation of the Americans is to see that Britain and France, who have committed themselves to the internationalisation of the Canal, if necessary by force, should not be made to look silly through having to back down too obviously. (*Observer*, August 12.).

Towards What Outcome?

Such was the ignominious dilemma to which the bellicose heroics of Eden, Pineau, Gaitskell and Morrison at the outset of the Suez crisis had brought Britain and France. No wonder that a certain amount of 'sober second thinking', in President Eisenhower's phrase, has been taking place. What now? There is no doubt that a retreat has had to be made from the initial plans for immediate 'strongest action' without waiting for anyone. But the aims of Anglo-French imperialism, with a measure of United States backing short of war, have not been abandoned. Britain arbitrarily controlled the convening and composition of the London Conference (which has no status to settle anything) to secure a fictitious 'majority' (representing a minority of the world) for its aims. The demand to impose some form of 'international control', *i.e.* 'collective colonialism', violating Egyptian national sovereignty, is maintained. How save by force?

Menace of a Clash

What is the proposed policy of Western imperialism if Egypt refuses to surrender to collective colonialism? Present indications suggest that the model now favoured is that of the method employed in relation to Iran to defeat the oil nationalisation law, the method of economic strangulation to compel eventual capitulation through a change of règime. The present economic and financial measures already in operation against Egypt would be continued and intensified, with freezing of foreign assets and balances, refusal of payment of dues save to the dispossessed Paris headquarters and stimulated shortage of pilots, to make the peaceful operation of the Canal under the existing règime unworkable and either compel Egyptian capitulation or provoke a crisis in one or another form, with the massed armed forces ready to intervene in the event of a crisis or under the pretext of crisis incidents. This reckless calculation ignores the profound changes in the whole Middle Eastern and world situation since the fall of

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Moussadeq. It ignores the strength of the anti-imperialist unity and determination of the Egyptian people; it ignores equally the awakened anti-imperialist unity and determination of all the Arab peoples; it ignores, above all, the changed balance of the world and the strength of world support for Egypt, including the seriousness of the consequences for the relations of India and Britain. So long as the Western powers maintain this policy and refuse the path of a negotiated compromise, the menace of a clash remains serious—a clash which could extend into a conflict between Western imperialism and the whole world of national liberation. The menace of war is not yet removed.

We Can Save Peace

A reasonable negotiated settlement can be obtained, combining the full national rights and sovereignty of Egypt with adequate recognition, representation and guarantees for the legitimate claims of the users of the Canal. The conciliatory attitude of Egypt has shown the way. India has shown the way. But such a reasonable negotiated settlement can only be attained if all the forces of peace and sanity, equally inside Britain and outside Britain, combine their efforts to ensure it. What has so far been gained is time for the forces of reason and sanity to assert themselves and compel such a solution. The centre of this battle is here in Britain. The rally within the labour movement to check the course to war has begun. Let it be carried forward, with all the strength of all the progressive forces of the trade union and labour movement, and of all supporters of peace, not only to achieve the immediate aim of forcing the Government to change its policy and reach a peaceful settlement on Suez, but to build up such unity as can rally the nation to bring down this Government of war and economic deterioration, and open the way to return a Government with a consistent policy for peace and the interests of the people.

August 20, 1956. R.P.D.

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THE FAR-SIGHTED MILITANTS

JOHN BAIRD, M.P.

DURING these last decades Labour's rank and file have suffered one defeat after another—not at the hands of their political opponents—but from their own leadership. The 1926 betrayal, the collapse of 1931, the leadership's lack of purpose during the latter days of the 1945-50 government, and the subsequent programmes of 1950 and 1951: on all these issues and at all these critical times the rank and file was much more militant and far-seeing than the leadership.

Despite these reverses the Party membership is still undaunted. It is indeed heartening to find them still resilient and full of fight. The resolutions in the preliminary agenda submitted to this year's Party Conference* make this quite clear. On all major political issues the rank and file are shown to be demanding more vigorous Socialist action. Mr. Gaitskell and some of his friends seem to have lost faith in nationalisation as a method of public planning. That, however, is not the position among the Constituency Parties. Amongst the resolutions submitted for the National Conference, there are 32 demanding more, not less, nationalisation and another nine calling for more control over profits and investments.

The party has no policy on automation although this is the most vital industrial problem facing us today. There are, I am glad to see, 29 resolutions on this subject urging the leadership and the Conference to define its policy. The Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executives and Technicians (ASSET) argues that 'the Labour Party has been slow to expose the government's failure to deal with these problems and calls for an effective statement of policy to be published within the next six months'.

Reigate Constituency Labour Party calls on the Conference 'to instruct the National Executive Committee to prepare as a matter of urgency a statement of Socialist policy on the problems of employment and distribution of wealth that will arise when automation is introduced on a large scale in this country'.

The Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen claims that Conference should recognise 'that the engineering industry occupies the key position in the manufacture and introduction of automatic machinery and therefore considers that it is essential for the next Labour Government to introduce speedily the

*Resolutions for the 55th Annual Conference of the Labour Party, October 1 to 5, 1956.

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public ownership and control of certain sectors of this industry'.

By the way, what has happened to the Amalgamated Engineering Union's Policy for Engineering? Mr. Pannell would be doing his union a great service if he would use his obvious influence with the Party leadership to convince them of the need to include the Policy for Engineering in the next Party Programme.

On colonial policy the Shadow Cabinet (whose views are voiced in the House by Mr. Bevan) recently refused to divide the House during the debate on atrocities in Kenya. The Labour Party's policy statement on Colonial Plural Societies is a compromise. It states: 'Resistance can be expected from European and Asian minorities who find their position weakened and the economic, political and administrative power of these minorities is so great that their antagonism could violently dislocate these societies'. It may, therefore, be necessary, they argue, 'to invest Governors with reserve powers for a period to protect legitimate minority interests against excessive nationalist ardour'. There is no such concern for the present ruling minorities among the resolutions to Conference. 49 are on colonial policy. Most of them indicate the great shame of the British workers at what imperialism is doing in the colonies. Coventry Borough Party presses 'for an end to the bloodshed in Malaya, Cyprus and Kenya', and demands that the next Labour Government should declare that 'self government and self determination will be extended to all colonies'. The A.E.U. resolution calls on the Conference to 'condemn the present government policy in the colonies and supports the demand for full trade union and democratic rights for the colonial peoples'.

Almost all the resolutions are in the same militant tone. 34 demand the end of conscription. Thirteen want heavy cuts in arms expenditure, eight want the abandonment of H-bomb tests and three have the courage to argue for a European Security Pact.

The worsening economic situation and the effects of the rising cost of living are reflected in a large number of demands for increased pensions (40 resolutions) and in the demands for the restoration of the housing subsidies (38).

This militancy is to be found in the pages of the preliminary agenda every year, but alas, by the time the various resolutions have been amalgamated or mangled into the composite statements which find their way into the final agenda much of their revolutionary vigour will have disappeared, and where it is possible to have a clear issue debated we can be sure that the big battalions of the trade unions will be there to protect the Establishment.

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Must we, then, continue to witness these fine shock workers for Socialism wasting their energies in what must often seem to them a hopeless struggle. I do not think so. It is very easy to put one's finger on the trouble. It is not so easy to point to the remedy. If the trade union branch meeting was as militant as the average Constituency Labour or Ward Party we could ensure a real Socialist programme for the next election.

The position is much more hopeful than seemed possible a few years ago and the struggle for the treasurership will reflect the new direction in which some unions are moving. There is still much hard propaganda work to be done, however, before the movement becomes Socialist, and that work must be carried out in the trade union branch room and on the factory floor.

BACKGROUND TO THE TORY SQUEEZE

JOHN EATON

> One of the most important tasks before us today is to ensure that, while maintaining our world-wide approach to the problems of trade and finance, we should lose no opportunity of taking a lead in strengthening the economic ties between this country and the commonwealth, and between this country and Europe. . . .
>
> Nothing is more important to this end than an accumulation of savings. We must have capital resources. We must have stability for our currency. Our ammunition in the cold war is the power to invest, to develop other countries as well as our own, to play our part—and more than our part—in the struggle for the soul of the neutral world. So perhaps there could be other slogans too. Save to be free. Aye, and I am not ashamed of it. Save to be great!
>
> (Mr. Harold Macmillan, Budget Speech to the House of Commons, April 17, 1956.)

A GOVERNMENT must have—or try to have— a coherent policy after which it consciously strives. This statement of Macmillan's comes near to expressing the essentials of the policy after which the present ruling circles of British capitalism are striving. Since the closing years of the nineteenth century imperial domination has been the underlying theme of British capitalist policy. Over vast areas of the world political control held the ring

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for the penetration of economic interests. Today circumstances have forced big reductions in the area over which Britain exercises direct political control. Over a far wider area, however, British capital still retains important economic footholds.

In the ceaseless struggle 'to keep sterling strong', and to maintain the influence of British capital, the guiding thread of the traditional policy of British capitalism is, therefore, its policy of overseas investment. This should not be interpreted too narrowly: the significance of overseas investment is not to be judged solely by the returns—the profits or super profits—that they directly yield, but rather in terms of the economic function of overseas investment as the kernel of a whole policy designed to entrench British owned industry, trade and finance in positions of exclusive advantage in wide areas of the world. It is for this reason that the facts of British overseas investment provide the indispensable background in analysing the economic and foreign policies of British imperialism. In this connection a recently published article by F. W. Paish on 'Britain's Foreign Investment: The Post-war Record' (*Lloyds Bank Review*, July 1956) is of great interest.

Spokesmen of British finance capital are very conscious of the fact that Britain's overseas economic power lies in the ability to supply capital and control investment overseas. Professor Paish's comparison between Britain's position as an exporter of capital in 1913 with that today is, therefore, of special interest and significance:

> In spite of the fact that real national income is today probably more than 25 per cent above the pre-war level and probably 70 per cent higher than in 1913, British capital exports, which in 1913 were the equivalent of about £800 million at today's prices, have in the last three years averaged only some £60 million a year, while over the whole of the post-war period they have been substantially negative.

However, taking only capital movements between Britain and the non-dollar world, we find that capital exports were positive, amounting to no less that £1,110 million in the years from 1946 to 1949 alone. Of this total £757 million went to the sterling area and £243 million to Western Europe. These overseas investments were financed to a small extent by withdrawals of capital from such countries as South America but in the main part out of loans and grants from the United States totalling in this period £1,663 million (£388 million as gifts and £1,275 million as loans). The price of maintaining the economic position of British imperialism in this

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period was American aid; and inevitably this involved subservience to American foreign policy.

Taking now 1950 to 1952, capital imports from the dollar area were reduced to £420 million of which £293 million was in the form of grants. Britain's exports of capital were greatly reduced totalling no more than £508 million. The main recipients of exports of capital from Britain (apart from drawings on the sterling balances) were Empire countries other than the colonies. Exports of capital to the 'non-colonial sterling area' totalled £325 million and to the colonies £163 million; but against this must be set the fact that the colonies increased their sterling balances in London by no less than £414 million in this period, and so provided 85 per cent of the total funds required to finance both their own receipts of British capital and those of the Dominions. Thus the funds available to British finance capital were supplied primarily out of surplus value produced in colonial territories and transferred to London (in the form of sterling balances) through the accounts of the colonial currency boards, Crown agents, marketing boards, price assistance funds, etc.

Taking 1953 to 1955, exports of British capital to the non-dollar world fell further to £304 million. The colonies were both the main providers and the main recipients. Sterling balances increased by £237 million; capital exports to the Empire outside of the colonies were much reduced, amounting to only £87 million. Capital funds received by Britain from America were comparatively small (£123 million coming mainly from non-Government sources).

Taking these last two periods together, i.e. between 1949 and 1955, we see that, apart from changes in the sterling balances, capital exported (which was probably in the main long-term investments) totalled £1,021 million of which £775 million went to the sterling area. Funds deposited in London in the form of sterling balances increased by £621 million (an increase that was more than accounted for by the increase of the sterling balances of colonial territories excluding Hong Kong, namely, £650 million). In this connection Professor Paish comments that the sterling area has been 'collectively providing on short term the great bulk of the capital it has borrowed on long term'.

The table below shows the important differences there have been in the capital movements to and from the colonial empire. ('Other capital exports' are mainly long-term investments).

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Capital Transactions between U.K. and Colonies 1950-1955*

(£ millions)

	West Africa	*East Africa*	*West Indies*	*Malayan Area*	*Other*
Increase in Sterling Balances	307	82‡	52	257	42
Other Capital Exports from U. K. ..	78	233‡	108	4	29

*excluding Hong-Kong, N. Rhodesia and Nyasaland.
‡partly estimated.

An initial export of capital serves as a stepping stone to economic advantages of various kinds. It will serve as a starting point to further accumulation of capital out of surplus value produced as a result of it; but it also establishes an economic foothold which helps British monopolies to assert a domination in other fields, such as merchanting, insurance, banking, shipping and so forth. The value of exported capital is, therefore a rather elusive concept. The funds originally transferred or nominal share values tell only part of the story. The point is the possibilities of making profits generated by the original transfer of funds. Professor Paish states 'British residents have done a good deal better since the war as owners of overseas assets than they have as suppliers of foreign capital'. We should note the figures that appear in the Government White Papers on the 'Balance of Payments'. These show the following receipts:

(In £ million)	1938	1955
Receipts from Interest, Profits and Dividends	205	317
Other items (net) ..	72	234

This heading described as 'other items (net)' is an important one. Its scope is defined in the White Paper as follows:

> This covers all other current transactions except defence aid, *e.g.* the overseas transactions of oil companies (other than capital expenditure) insurance, Civil Aviation, Royalties, Commissions, Banking and other Services. It also includes sales of gold at home for industrial use and an allowance for profits accruing from abroad to U.K. merchants. Remittances in respect of films are also included.

Incidentally these are *net* figures and some, *e.g.* films, are debit items. Taken together these two items show an increase from £277 million to £551 million.

Professor Paish summarising his review of statistics on the export of capital says:

> The position of the United Kingdom as an exporter of capital to the non-dollar world . . . passed through three phases during the past ten years.
>
> In the first up to 1949 it was able to act as an intermediary for passing

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on a large proportion of the grants and loans received from the United States, mainly to the sterling area and, it may be surmised, particularly to the non-colonial sterling area.

In the second, up to the end of 1952, it was still able to act as an intermediary, though on a smaller scale, by passing on the imports of capital received from the colonies in the form of rapidly rising sterling balances partly back to the colonies in the form of long-term investments, but mainly to the non-colonial sterling area. In the third period now ending, the rise in colonial sterling balances has been barely sufficient to cover long-term investment in the colonies, including Aden. It seems probable that we are entering upon a fourth period in which the rise in colonial sterling balances may slow down or cease altogether and may provide little or nothing towards the export of long-term capital even to the colonies.

This summary points clearly to the problem now confronting British finance capital. From what source is it to obtain the exportable funds on which its position of domination rests? This question once posed, gives us a deeper insight into the logic of Macmillan's Credit Squeeze. The aim of this policy is to provide a greater surplus from the exploitation of the British people. It is especially interesting to note that *The Banker* in its August issue quoted extensively from Professor Paish's article and drew the following conclusion:

If Britain is to regain its economic leadership in the Commonwealth—and maintain its political leadership—retrenchment at home will need to be carried far enough both to yield the necessary margin of investible resources and to restore the international competitiveness of its industry. The market for both the finance and the equipment needed by the developing Commonwealth is all but open—and Britain's competitors are showing no hesitation in edging their way in. (*The Banker*, August, 1956, p. 498.)

If it achieves its purpose the Credit Squeeze will reduce the level of productive activity within Britain and cause some measure of unemployment. But, it is sometimes asked, does not a lower level of productive activity mean also lower profits for the capitalists? Does it not reduce the total values out of which the surplus for capital export has to be found? It is true that for some capitalists profits will be reduced. But the calculation from the point of view of the *big* capitalists runs somewhat as follows: the general level of incomes of the people (including the incomes of the smaller capitalists) will be reduced, a rise in unemployment will create a downward pressure on wage levels, the credit restrictions will reduce consumption and also limit the scale of activity of the smaller capitalists and as a result even though the total volume of production is reduced the surplus available to the big capitalists will be

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greater, because the British people, i.e. broadly speaking all but the dominant monopolies and finance capitalists, will take a relatively smaller share in what has been produced.

That is the logic of the Tory policy of freeing the economy from controls save only the over-riding control exercised by the manipulation of their central financial institutions. However, quite apart from the danger of such a policy from the point of view of the people generally, it is one that faces mountainous obstacles. All the contradictions and difficulties of a failing imperialist policy tend to shew themselves. Why is it that British capitalism with a level of production today probably 70 per cent higher than it was in 1913 finds such great impediments to raising funds for capital export?

From the other side, namely, competing claims on the product of British industry, first place is taken by Government expenditure. This accounts now for almost one-fifth of the national product reflecting a great increase both in military and civil expenditure. Arms expenditure which accounted for about one-twentieth of the national product immediately before the Second World War now accounts for about one-tenth. The importance of engineering exports to Britain's balance of payments is well known. In 1955 these (strictly speaking the products of the 'metal-using industry') amounted to £1,280 million (at 1954 factory prices). Set against this the value of engineering products supplied for the defence programme, namely, £600 million, and one sees how great a burden military expenditure imposes on this crucial sector of industry. What is the logic behind this expenditure, crippling not only to the British people but also a serious impediment to overseas investment? On the one hand, it is a consequence of the American alliance and the military programmes that it necessitates; on the other, British imperialism is finding recourse to armed force increasingly necessary in order to maintain control of its colonial territories.

The increase in Government expenditure for civilian purposes reflects increased expenditures on social services. Cut as these have been and inadequate as they are, the popular demand for a 'welfare state' has been too urgent to be disregarded, and increasing social service expenditures have had to be incurred. The mood of the people, their conception of the rights to which they should be entitled is a very real factor in the current situation, and whatever the aims and desires of the Tory Government may be, reductions in Government expenditure in the civilian sector will be extremely difficult to enforce. The fact that a Labour Government was returned in 1945 with a programme that held out hopes of a greatly changed

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economic order of society, was not a mere flash in the pan. It revealed a great maturing in the political consciousness in the British working class and of the people generally. It is precisely the demands of the British working class, demands and expectations that they are prepared to fight for, that is likely to make the whole policy of the credit squeeze turn out very differently from the aims of the ruling circles of British finance capital. For all its failures the 1945 Labour programme has left legacies that are imbedded in the structure of British economy. For all their shortcomings the nationalised industries represent a stabilising element in the economy and generate substantial—and inescapable—demands for home investment expenditure. The Health Service has come to stay and the popular demand for more hospitals, better education facilities, more houses and so forth, is not one than can be lightly brushed aside.

The difficulties of the economic position of British imperialism may be summarised as (*a*) the increasing cost of maintaining imperialist power, (*b*) the increasing pressure of the independence movements in the empire, (*c*) the demands and expectations of the British people backed by a maturing political consciousness, (*d*) the increasing pressure of American imperialism against the interests of British imperialism coupled now with the resurgence of economic pressure from Japan and Western Germany.

The contradictions undermining the policy of British finance capital today are obvious. Is the City of London really going to be able to dominate a 'liberalised' world economy (even if controls against the dollar are maintained)? Is the British economy really going to gain new markets in face of cut-throat competition from other leading industrial powers? Is British finance capital really going to succeed in building up vastly greater financial reserves and funds permitting the export of capital on a greatly enlarged scale? The chances of this policy succeeding are in reality slender, and, if it did, it promises only a bleak future for the British people. But such a policy will arouse opposition not only from the working class and the masses of the people. It also will meet with disfavour from those sections of British capitalism that are concerned not so much with the exclusive aims of imperialist policy but with obtaining orders for the products of factories in Britain.

But it is easier to see the likelihood of opposition to the traditional policy of finance capital that is being pursued at present by the ruling circles in Britain than it is to discern the lines of a positive alternative. The strength of the Macmillan policy consists precisely

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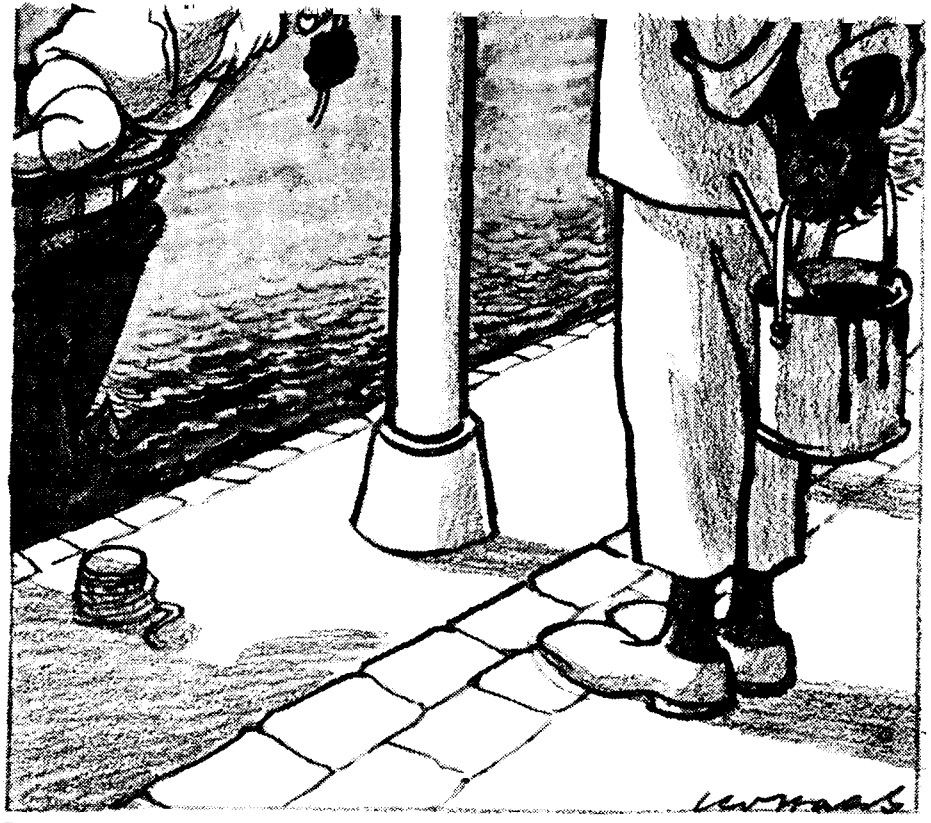

(From *Eulenspiegel*, Berlin.)

Fulfilled Ahead of Time

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in the fact that it is a traditional policy. It implies financial and commercial procedures that are familiar and it appeals to sentiments that command customary support without much reflection. To knit the alternative together into a workable national policy is not a simple matter. The waste involved in throwing away the possibility of developing markets offered by East-West trade is obvious and a great deal could be gained from a change of policy in this field alone; but on its own a change here can only go a limited way towards solving the problems of the British economy. New relations with the economies of such countries as India, Australia and Ceylon need to be worked out and, more difficult still, with the colonial territories whose economies have been distorted and mangled by the domination of British monopoly capital. These are the alternatives, either 'the liberalisation of trade' or an elaborate structure of import, export and exchange controls. If the most is to be made of possible trade agreements in order the maintain stability in the main foreign trade relations, a powerful and positive participation of the Government in foreign trade matters is inescapable. It is true that all these problems could be solved by a socialist economy. But we must be careful not to copy the Irishman who when asked in London the best way to get to Dublin replied that if he was going to Dublin he wouldn't start from London in the first instance. We have to start from where we are: that means Britain as it is today politically and economically, a Britain that is facing a crisis of economic policy but not yet having any substantial body of people united around a clear alternative to the policy of those circles that are at present dominant. There is a great need to build out of the growing struggles against existing Government policy, both in its economic and political aspect, a more vivid consciousness of a possible alternative policy, one that is concrete and realisable as a means of breaking away from the succession of crises of deterioration towards which the traditional policy of Tory-imperialism is leading.

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THE SUEZ QUESTION

QUÆSTOR

SEVENTY years and more have passed since that anti-imperialist fighter and poet, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, wrote in *The Wind and the Whirlwind,* of the first bold efforts of Egyptian patriots, by a national revolution, to strike off the golden chains rivetted on their ancient land by foreign bondholders and royal parasites, and of their call which startled the whole world:

There in the land of Death, where toil is cradled,
That tearful Nile, unknown to Liberty,
It spoke in passionate tones of human freedom,
And of those rights of Man which cannot die.

And in the streets, where still the shade of Pharaoh
Stalked in his sons, the Mamelukian horde,
Youth greeted youth with words of exultation
And shook his chains and clutched as for a sword.

Blunt wrote of their leader, Ahmed Arabi, son of a village headman, soldier-leader of the rising in 1881, reminding the people of their slave-like toil (the Suez Canal, for example, built from 1856-69 with the labour of tens of thousands of conscripted peasants):

It was no law of God nor of the Nations
That in this land, alone of the fair Earth
The hand that sowed should reap not of its labour. . . .

How have we suffered at the hands of strangers,
Binding their sheaves—and harvesting their wrath!
Our service has been bitter—and our wages
Hunger and pain and nakedness and drouth.

To live in ignorance, to die by service,
To pay our tribute and our stripes receive:
This was the ransom of our toil in Eden
This, and our one sad liberty—to grieve.

A new future opened before the Egyptians, one in which 'the men of usury shall fly your land', and their princes would be among their servants:

You shall become a nation with the nations.
Lift up your voices, for the night is past.
Stretch forth your hands. The hands of the free peoples
Have beckoned you, the youngest and the last.

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The hopes were shattered by treachery, by the British guns bombarding Alexandria in 1882, by a British invasion and the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. But Blunt warned Britain that a day of reckoning would come, and not only in Egypt:

The nations of the East have left their childhood.
Thou art grown old. Their manhood is to come;
And they shall carry on Earth's high tradition
Through the long ages when thy lips are dumb.

Some of his other warnings were quoted in the February *Labour Monthly*.

Blunt was no socialist, and he could not conceive of Britain being reborn as a socialist country, under the guidance of the working class, no longer to be 'dumb': or even of British Labour, in its militant mood after the second world war, imposing on a weakened British imperialism the acceptance of some concessions to the rebelling 'nations of the East'. But his words had their prophetic strength nevertheless, as we are reminded today on an immensely greater scale than he could even imagine.

For in a flash the events of the last few weeks have lit up the true situation in the world. The Arab peoples striking blow after blow at the hideous misery in which they have been held by the imperialist Powers, for the latter's benefit, throughout the Near East: drawing after them the other semi-colonial countries of Islamic culture: through the Middle East (Libya, Persia, Afghanistan) to the Far East (Indonesia): their standard-bearer for the moment the people of Egypt, proud in the reconquest of its 5,000-year-old statehood (the oldest in the world)—as yesterday it was Jordan, one of the youngest and smallest among them—but all conscious of being the spokesmen of colonial peoples everywhere: India a very powerful spokesman for them amongst the Great Powers. Against them the block of powerful states of finance-capital, Britain, France, U.S.A. and their junior partners in world robbery—the Dominions, Holland and others: so recently the unchallenged masters of the natural resources and labour of these countries, arrogant in their panoply of 'reeking tube and iron shard', bomber-planes, tanks and landing-craft, itching to take any excuse to win back their supremacy, provided only the moment be favourable: and desperately conscious that behind the 1,500 millions who have shaken off colonial bonds since the last war, hundreds of millions more are waiting their turn in Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean. The third great camp, the one of socialism, with the U.S.S.R. and China at its head,

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steadily, quietly and ceaselessly interposing its pressure for peaceful settlement of the quarrel, for reasonable discussion instead of bloody adventure: offering its own assistance to the under-developed countries irrespective of their social systems, in strict keeping with United Nations principles: yet ready, if the imperialist Powers wish it, to co-operate with them in raising living standards throughout the world.

Here is the conflict with Egypt. For how many months have the imperialist Powers not been telling each other that they must 'bar the way to world Communism' by economic aid to the under-developed countries, the ex-colonies and semi-colonies? How long have they not been boasting that the days of imperialism are past? Yet when Egypt asks for aid for the Aswan Dam, it turns out that first the United States, then Britain and finally the World Bank refuse their promised loans—because Egypt will not put her economy under their supervision, or (shall we say) arrange it to their liking. Yet look back fifty years to an age of unquestioned imperialism—and you will find foreign controllers-general in Egypt (as in Turkey and China) doing precisely what the Western Powers wanted to restart in 1956. 'New presbyter is but old priest, writ large.'

Of course Egypt could have turned at once for aid to the Soviet Union; but Nasser is not a socialist either. He wants to develop his country's backward economy on state capitalist lines. He pro-claims nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, so as to use for productive purposes the net revenue from this huge enterprise dug on Egyptian soil with Egyptian labour—and, by the way, with Egypt providing at that time over £3,500,000 out of the £8,000,000 re-quired, by taking up nearly 178,000 shares out of 400,000 (France subscribed £4,100,000).* He undertakes to compensate the share-holders at a rate far higher than even the poor victimised mine-owners got in Great Britain—and the latter holds 'frozen' in her sterling balances far more Egyptian money (£110 millions) than would be needed to pay them off. The Egyptian Government takes over the company's offices—and what a howl of fury rises from the British and French Tories (and to their undying shame, from the Labour leaders too)!

Listen to the charges—which resemble nothing so much as the charges of the cat Fury against a mouse, in *Alice in Wonderland.*

*Palmerston and the British Government fought to the last against building the Canal: Britain bought its present shares from the bankrupt ruler of Egypt, once the Canal was a going concern.

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'A threat to free and unfettered passage!' Utter nonsense, when you remember that Egypt relies on the revenue from Canal tolls to build the Aswan Dam. But it is a threat to the shareholders, who (for example) in 1955 received dividends totalling £10 millions (25 per cent. more than what was paid for the shares): and to the Board, who include directors of some of the biggest British banks, insurance and shipping companies, etc.

'One nation must not control an international waterway!' Pretty cool, considering that Britain controlled it alone from 1882 to 1952—dragging Egypt into the war of 1914-18 as a result, and expressly rejecting internationalisation under the League of Nations in 1924 (when the Egyptian Premier Zaghul proposed it to Ramsay Macdonald): considering too how Britain has opposed international supervision of the Dardanelles.

'You can't trust Nasser!' Look who's talking, the Egyptians could retort. In 1910 Blunt already listed 16 broken pledges by Britain to evacuate Egypt: by 1952 they had grown to nearly 50—and even then the troops only left because Britain was in a tough spot, internationally. Look who's talking, all the Arab peoples are saying—mindful of the swindling exploits of Col. Lawrence in the first world war, which even today make the Tories blush.

'We aren't challenging nationalisation, it's only this particular case we object to.' Is that so? It was a different story that was told when the Russians nationalised foreign companies in 1918: Britain and France invaded the country to get back the factories and mines. It was a different tune heard in 1938, when most violent threats were uttered against Mexico for nationalising British oilwells.

'Nasser's action is against international law!' Then why don't you take him to the International Court at the Hague, as he challenged you to do? The ludicrous wrigglings of Selwyn Lloyd on the B.B.C. are sufficient answer: he daren't.

'Egyptians aren't capable of running the Canal!' What about the obligation on the Company, then, under the 1856 Charter and the 1888 Convention—an obligation recognised by Britain as signatory to the Convention (article 16)—to hand back the Canal to the Egyptian Government in 1968? Was the British Government preparing to use the same argument then? Probably it was: 45 years ago already, when in occupation of the country, it tried through a subservient Egyptian Government to engineer an extension of the concession from 1968 to 2008. The scheme was only dropped when a young patriot, Wardani, shot the pro-British premier.

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'Britain's task is to persuade the Egyptian Government not to confuse sovereignty with jingoistic nationalism, which can only provoke general hostility' (Morgan Phillips, Labour Party secretary, August 12). Physician, heal thyself! Was it Egypt which concentrated troops, planes and warships in preparation for invading Britain—or vice versa? As for general hostility, it seems, by cold arithmetic, mostly to be directed against Britain, rather than Egypt.

But enough of these humbugging charges against Egypt, which remind one of the biting remarks of a famous English propagandist of socialism:

> The Britisher has a special relish for hypocrisy. He thoroughly enjoys it as a sweet morsel. Other nations take their hypocrisy more or less sadly, as a conventional lie of civilisation, getting over it as quickly as possible, like a black draught, and saying little about it. The Anglo-Saxon chews it and gets the full flavour out of it.
>
> (E. Belfort Bax, *History of the Nonconformist Conscience*, 1896).

More important is the following.

The very first paragraph of the Anglo-Soviet communiqué signed on April 27 this year runs:

> The representatives of the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom recognised that the strengthening of Soviet-British relations in political, trade, scientific, cultural and other fields would be in the interests of both countries. They were also convinced that this would help to consolidate general peace and security.

Moreover the section dealing with the Near and Middle East (at that time it was 'peace in the region of Palestine' which was the main practical worry) began with this declaration of principle:

> The Soviet Union and the United Kingdom have the firm intention to do everything in their power to facilitate the maintenance of peace and security in the Near and Middle East.

In his farewell message to Bulganin and Khrushchov on April 27, Eden expressed his hope that the Anglo-Soviet talks 'will prove the beginning of growing confidence between our countries'.

Now here, at the end of July, three months later, was a remarkable chance to strengthen that confidence. Did the Tory Government take it? Did it use 'the strengthening of Soviet-British relations' in the political field to consult the Soviet Government about agreement over the Suez Canal, and thus 'consolidate general peace and security'? Did it suggest that the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom should now co-operate in finding a solution 'to facilitate the maintenance of peace and security in the Near East'?

No it didn't. Its pledges proved merely waste paper. Just as if

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it hadn't signed them, it ignored the Soviet Union. Just as if the cold war were still raging, it turned to gang up first with France and the United States—and then tried to present the U.S.S.R. and the other countries with a *fait accompli* (including war-like concentrations in the Mediterranean). And this is the Government which dares to talk of 'international confidence'—and for which Mr. Gaitskell on August 2 proclaimed his backing, in terms which sent the Tory press into raptures!

If the British Government had remembered its obligations: if it had had preliminary consultations with the U.S.S.R. at least on the scale that it had with France and the United States: an element of moderation and prudence, of concern for opinions in Asia, Africa and the smaller countries of Europe, would have entered into the discussions from the very first. The world would have been spared a new bout of sabre-rattling and hysterical abuse, British homes and British public finances would have been spared new alarms, worries and needless strain.

Why can't you keep your promises, Sir Anthony? Because your Government is based on moneybags and warmongering—and if we are kept out of war this time, it will be only thanks to the opposition of the British people and to Britain's shameful isolation among the nations, save for a few other Powers breathing the leprous effluvium of imperialism.

We write before the final outcome of the conference at Lancaster House. But the proceedings up to August 20 have brought out the essential issues quite clearly.

On the one hand the old imperialism—armed bullying to protect the rights of foreign investors in colonial misery—produced the 'Dulles plan' published that day, after a week of juggling with texts. Its essence? An international board of states to control 'operation, maintenance and development' of the Canal, including repayment of the shareholders of the old Suez Canal Company—precisely the same scheme of 'collective colonialism', control of native enterprise in the interests of foreign bondholders and merchants, as was set up in the old Egypt of the Khedives, the old Ottoman Empire of the Sultan, the old China of the Manchu Emperors, in the 19th century. And the thinly disguised ultimatum behind it: if Egypt does not accept, then 'concerted measures' to be taken, by 'all or some' of the Powers.

On the other hand the voice of socialism and peace in the speeches of Shepilov, in unison with the voice of outraged ex-colonial nations, the voice of the 29 states and 1,500 million people represented at

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the Bandung Conference in April, 1955, speaking through Krishna Menon. The Soviet warning against the 'irreparable negative results' for Britain and France from aggression against Egypt, against violation of peace which might go beyond the Near and Middle East, against the attempt to overthrow Nasser: the Soviet and Indian plea to seek a settlement by negotiation, starting from recognition of 'the inalienable rights of the Egyptian state with regard to the Suez Canal': and the practical plan for such negotiations, tabled by Menon—its essence an Egyptian State Corporation *co-operating* with foreign users, ensuring free unhampered transit through the Canal.

Could there be a sharper contrast in the world—two-thirds of its working population on the one hand, the spokesmen of the European and American Stock Exchanges and money markets on the other?

FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

SERIOUS BUSINESS

Bernard Shaw has rendered great services to the nascent new world. Yet, if the fighters for the new world should consist only of people like Bernard Shaw, this new world would never be born. Therefore, our attitude towards Bernard Shaw is this. We have before us a brilliant man, but 'he is not a warrior in either camp, only a chance guest'. When Bernard Shaw is a guest in the bourgeois camp, we see on his face an expression of humour mingled with scorn, and when he pays a visit to the camp of the fighters 'for the great cause of liberty', we see on his face an expression of sympathy that is mingled with humour, because it seems to him that these fighters are rather ponderous, dogmatically credulous people.

We realise that Bernard Shaw is our ally. Yet, we know quite well that he may sometimes execute some amazing zigzag (he has done so occasionally, indulging in wittiscism at our expense) and do so in a manner calculated to evoke a satisfied grunt from the bourgeoisie.

Naturally, we have an ardent desire to speak to this remarkable old man at somewhat closer quarters. And now he arrives here as our guest. It is exceedingly curious to see what he writes in his telegram to the General Secretary of the Internatonal Union of Revoluntionary Writers, Bella Illes. He says that he has little time and he requests that under no circumstances should he be burdened with parades, receptions, or banquets. 'I am coming for serious business', he concludes his message. This is very good.

From *Bernard Shaw*, by A. Lunacharsky, September, 1931.

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EAST OF SUEZ

AJOY GHOSH

THE decision of the Egyptian Government led by Colonel Nasser to nationalise the Suez Canal lights up the entire situation in the East and more especially in North Africa and the Middle East. Even more symptomatic of the tremendous developments in this region is the mighty response it has evoked in the countries of this vast area. In India, there is universal rejoicing and stern resolve to stand with Egypt in fraternal solidarity.

Why have the people been so prompt, so unanimous in their solidarity? The response of the Indian people springs from the depths of their anti-imperialist sentiments, their feelings of unity with all popular struggle to liquidate the hard heritage of colonialism, their love of peace, their anger against the Anglo-American imperialist war-makers. Indeed, there could hardly be a more just action than the dramatic decision of President Nasser. The Suez Canal is Egyptian territory. The canal was built with Egyptian labour. The company managing it is registered in Egypt. Its nationalisation the Indian people see as the assertion of national sovereignty by a country from which extortionate concessions were wrung, when she was weak and when the imperialists plundered as they wished. The Indian people see in the act of nationalisation a manifestation of the might of the resurgence of the colonial peoples, which is shattering the very base of imperialism.

Hardly anybody is misled by the specious arguments of the possibility of the closing of the canal to shipping or the 'danger' of a rise in the freight rates. The Indian people fully understand Egypt's desire to raise revenues for nation-building purposes. They share the indignation of the Egyptians at the attempt of blackmail by the U.S.-British imperialists over the Aswan Dam. They realise that for the very purposes of revenue the government of Egypt will do its utmost to encourage traffic through the canal.

The bellicose declarations of the British and French Governments, together with the behind-the-scene manœuvres of the Americans, have angered all sections of Indian public opinion. This policy of 'getting tough' with the 'Asiatics' and 'Africans' might have paid some dubious dividends during the days of Disraeli but against the awakened East of today, it is not only futile but disastrous. The sabre-rattling of the Tory imperialists has not surprised anyone but

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the statements of Gaitskell have caused shock. People in India feel that the British Labour movement must assert itself so that its fair name is not spoilt by the performances of the dominant section of the Labour Party leadership. They welcome the immediate stand taken by the Communist Party of Great Britain.

All these recent historic events have served to underline the significance and the character of the imperialist sponsored Seato and Baghdad Pacts. The Indian people, as well as the Nehru government, have repeatedly condemned these pacts as war moves directed against the freedom and sovereignty of the countries of Asia and the Arab east. The experience in Kashmir and the United States-Pakistan military pact brought out sharply the aims of the imperialists, more particularly America, to crush independence wherever it was being asserted. The Baghdad and Seato alliances are essentially a new form of colonialism, a fresh attempt to impose colonial rule on countries like India, Indonesia, Burma, Egypt, Ceylon, etc., which have only recently won national sovereignty. These attempts at bringing back colonial slavery are part of the grand design to dragoon all these countries, with their vast resources and populations, into a war against the lands of socialism and new democracy.

It is claimed by sponsors of Seato and the Baghdad Pact that they are meant to counter aggression, that they provide a protective shield against the possibilities of Soviet or Chinese 'conquest.' But the peoples of this area, and many of the governments, know full well who the actual aggressors are. Take India. The Indian people and the Nehru government are one in the desire for close friendly ties with the peoples and government of the Soviet Union. Not only is there not the slightest fear of Soviet 'aggression' but there is wholehearted welcome of the 'invasion' from the Soviet Union in the form of singers, poets, ballet dancers, economic experts, steel plant builders, oil surveyors, trade missions, etc. The principles of Panch Shila* are not empty formalities but full of profound significance of mutual respect and help.

The same is the case with China. The Bandung Conference of April, 1955, showed clearly the depth and the sincerity of Sino-Indian amity, the deep bonds of Asian solidarity forged by history and fired by anti-imperialism, by a common desire to be free and democratic. It is ludicrous today to even think of 'aggression' by

*The 'Five Principles,' endorsed at the Bandung Conference, are: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; peaceful co-existence.

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China. It is only a question of how better and faster to consolidate and carry forward Afro-Asian solidarity.

Inevitably, therefore, the people of India refuse to be misled by the plea that Nato and Seato are defensive alliances. Defence of what and against whom?—this is the question they ask. Is it defence of national freedom of the countries of Asia and Africa? Is it defence of peace? Is it defence of democracy? From whom comes the threat to all this? The answer is supplied by what has happened in Vietnam, in Iran, in Pakistan, in Jordan. The answer is supplied by the threat that is being mounted against Egypt. Hence it is that imperialist propaganda, even when backed by Labour Party leaders, fails to carry conviction to Asian and African peoples.

Afro-Asian solidarity springs not only from sentiments of fellow feeling, not even merely from a desire to render mutual assistance in the task of national reconstruction. Afro-Asian solidarity has been found essential for maintenance of peace and national freedom. The solidarity is directed precisely against such aggressive groupings as Seato and the Baghdad Pact. All too clearly the Asian peoples look back on the recent past when the Western imperialist ruled the roost. All too clearly they see who it was that subverted the national government in Iran, who even now deny China a voice in the United Nations, who intrigue in Kashmir, who back up discredited puppets in Korea and Vietnam, who murder patriots in Malaya and hold on to West Irian. This Afro-Asian solidarity is not directed against the peoples of Europe or America. With fraternity and admiration we have all watched the principled and courageous stand of the Communist Parties of Britain, France and America. We have been with the many democratic organisations and individuals in these countries who have spoken out against the aggressors and for Asia's well-being. Together with these forces we, the peoples of Asia, will move forward in struggle for a new world of peace, democracy and socialism.

Are These on your Shelves ?

Any early numbers of *Labour Monthly*, but especially: July, September, 1921; June, August, 1922; May, 1923; May, July, 1924; January, May, 1925; March, 1926; October, 1927; May, 1928; December, 1929; March, July, 1930. Also: March, May, 1931; February, 1932; March, 1933; June, 1934; January, 1935; June, October, 1948; October, 1950. Write to The Manager, 134, Ballards Lane, London, N.3, who will be delighted to take them off your hands.

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SHAW AND THE SOVIET UNION

R. PAGE ARNOT

ON the centenary of the birth of George Bernard Shaw on July 26, 1956, the word socialism was not once mentioned in the celebratory articles in *The Times, Manchester Guardian*—nor *Daily Herald*. An equally explosive silence was observed about Shaw's attitude to the Soviet Union, from the time of the October Revolution onward. Shaw's fame has always been widespread in the Soviet Union; there were years when more performances of Shaw's plays were being given in Moscow than on the London stage. The purpose of this article, however, is to deal not so much with Soviet appreciation of Shaw as with Shaw's appreciation of the Soviet Union.

'These are the times that try men's souls', wrote Tom Paine in a critical moment of the American Revolution. It is true of all revolutions, especially as applied to their reception in other countries. The English bourgeois revolution of three centuries ago won little sympathy from the leading writers of feudal Europe, who assailed it with voice and pen to such an extent that the great poet John Milton tells in a poignant sonnet how he lost his eyesight through his toil in answering foreign slanders and defending the people of England. The French bourgeois revolution a hundred and fifty years later proved a similar hard test for the souls of poets and writers in other countries, a test that was passed by only a few like the Scottish peasant poet Robert Burns. October, the proletarian socialist revolution, as it was by far the greatest revolution in history, so also provided the highest challenge, the hardest test to the souls of the literary and artistic intelligentsia in every land, whether feudal or bourgeois, of every continent. Almost alone of the older intelligentsia of Great Britain Bernard Shaw passed that test with honour.

Some amongst the better-known British writers, who in the years before the imperialist war of 1914-18 had talked big of revolution, turned tail when the revolution came: and were later scornfully described to me by Shaw (in a conversation some 37 years ago) as 'literary anarchists'. Not so Shaw. To a meeting of his fellow-Fabians Shaw declared:

'We are socialists. The Russian side is our side.'

What a contrast was this simple statement of the old Fabian to the behaviour of so many reformist socialists who had turned Jingoes at the outbreak of war in 1914 and were supporting their own

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imperialist government. The contrast was still greater with those like Hyndman in Britain or Kautsky in Germany, whose pre-war parade of Marxism did not prevent them from denouncing the one Marxist party of Europe which had been true to the teachings of Marx and had led the workers and peasants of their country in the revolution. Four years later, when the victory of Soviet power against the fourteen-state intervention in the civil war had made possible communication with the outside world, Bernard Shaw in 1921 sent the latest volume of his plays, *Back to Methuselah,* to V. I. Lenin with an inscription wherein the writer of genius paid the homage of an old socialist to the man who was chief founder of the Soviet state. This he did at a time when a torrent of anti-Bolshevik propaganda had flooded Europe and America and when the name of Lenin was being slandered, execrated and vilified not only by the gutter-press of monopoly capitalism but by leading intellectuals and statesmen like Churchill. Thereafter for the remainder of his life Shaw was a friend of the Soviet peoples. Especially at moments when the tide of anti-Soviet agitation and intrigue by the capitalist powers rose high, Shaw came out strongly and plied his mighty pen in defence of the U.S.S.R.

Today when the prowess of the Soviet Union and of the wider system of socialism compels admiration throughout the world even from some adherents of a capitalist outlook, this attitude of a genius like Shaw may seem nothing remarkable. But the fact is that there were hard years in the past when few outside the revolutionary proletariat supported the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union, and when it required courage to speak out. Moreover, the development of Shaw before 1914 was such as to make it by no means certain in advance what his attitude would be to revolution. It requires to be explained.

There was a long history behind Shaw's attitude, going back to the revival of socialism in Britain some seventy-five years ago, when the first groups or societies of socialists were formed with little enough contact with the working class organisations then led by men who followed the Liberal Party. In those days of a few hundred socialists in the whole of Britain, the young Shaw, unsuccesful as a novelist, was known amongst them primarily as a socialist propagandist and agitator, especially as an open-air speaker in London's parks or at street corners. In 1883 he had read Marx's *Capital,* which made him a socialist. Gifted with a clear voice whose melodious tones were enhanced by his Irish accent and having trained himself to a perfect elocution of each vowel and consonant,

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Shaw, with his cogent argumentation, his superb command of language and the lambent play of his wit, soon became known as a first-class socialist agitator. The young Shaw was soon well-acquainted with Hyndman, founder of the Social-Democratic Federation (whom Marx and Engels never trusted), with the poet William Morris, founder of the short-lived Socialist League, with Marx's daughter Eleanor (who incidentally organised the first private and amateur performance of Ibsen's *Doll's House,* and gave Shaw the rôle of Krogstad), and with a host of others who were later to make their name in the world for good or ill. Frederick Engels knew the young Shaw, laughed at his *jeux d'esprit* and has recorded his impression of the *hochnasige* (stuck-up) Fabians with whom Shaw was to be linked up.

Though the young Shaw very soon forsook the economic doctrines of Marx, joining the opportunist Fabian Society of which he and Sidney Webb were to become the leading figures for half-a-century, there remained a contradiction. While in practice he strove against the application of Marxism and argued for the policy of Fabianism (the basis of Labour Party reformism) Shaw, unlike other British opportunists, never failed to record his indebtedness to the founder of scientific socialism, of communism. Moreover, even in his most reformist period up to 1910, by his plays and other writings he did the work of a revolutionary artist, exposing and destroying bourgeois rubbish, false ideals of conduct and of social relations. His loathing of capitalist society was expressed in the words of one of his characters:

> Modern English polite society, my native sphere, seems to me as corrupt as consciousness of culture and absence of honesty can make it. A canting, lie-loving, fact-hating, scribbling, chattering, wealth-hunting, pleasure-hunting, celebrity-hunting mob, that, having lost the fear of hell, and not replaced it by the love of justice, cares for nothing but the lion's share of the wealth wrung by threat of starvation from the hands of the classes that create it.

All Shaw's intense and passionate hatred of capitalism, of its ruthless exploitation at home and in the colonies, of its shams and pretensions, its cruelty and servility, its parliamentary and other institutional hypocrisies, its much-vaunted two-party system kept bursting forth and transcended his intellectualist assumptions of Fabianism. Even while still regarded as the arch-Fabian, Shaw could write:

> Marx opened my eyes to the facts of history and civilisation, gave me an entirely fresh conception of the universe, provided me with a purpose and a mission in life.
>
> (Hesketh Pearson, p.68.)

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That purpose was the destruction of capitalist ideas and the spreading of the idea of socialism. With the same passionate intensity as he hated capitalism, Shaw loved socialism, worked for it, toiled for it, made it his mission in life. Therefore when the Russian Revolution brought into being a society directed towards and driving towards socialism, the soul of Shaw was saved by it from the sort of political degeneration which more and more afflicted the younger Fabians.

Bernard Shaw was in his sixty-second year in the October of 1917. The third of a century thereafter until his death in October, 1950, is a remarkable Shavian period, with the Soviet Union as an increasing factor in Shaw's thought, as evidenced in his innumerable writings in books and in newspapers, in his plays and in his broadcasts. In November, 1918, Shaw made his last speech as Fabian delegate to a Labour Party Conference, a speech which persuaded the delegates to end the Labour Party's participation in the Lloyd George coalition government. For seven years Shaw was chairman of the independent Labour Research Department (in that capacity writing a manifesto for the national strike of British railwaymen in October, 1919), the monthly publications of which body, as I am told, V. I. Lenin arranged to have specially brought to him by courier from Stockholm.

It must be remembered that Shaw did not share the insularity of so many British writers, who knew little about life and conditions under the Tsardom. In the 'eighties of last century he, like other socialists, was friendly with Narodnik exiles in London, especially with Sergei Kravchinsky who wrote under the pen-name of Stepniak. Forty years ago Shaw related to me how discussions with an exile from Tsardom had caused him very considerably to rewrite his play *Arms and the Man*. Then he corresponded with Leo Tolstoy, who rebuked Shaw for his irreverence—much to Shaw's delight. He also knew well the translations of Chekhov made by Constance Garnett—herself a socialist of the 'nineties and a friend of Tolstoy—and avowed in the sub-title of his play *Heartbreak House* that it was inspired by Chekhov. Lastly, he was a friend of Maxim Gorki who hailed Shaw as 'one of the most courageous thinkers in Europe'. Yes, Shaw knew quite a lot about the social and political background of the Tsarist Empire before revolution gave him a new and absorbing interest in the peoples of the Soviet Union.

But this interest, and, more than interest, this friendliness did not mean an immediate full understanding. When the New Economic

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Policy was in operation in 1922 and subsequent years before the first Five Year Plan there were many in Europe who thought it was not the temporary retreat designated by Lenin but a permanent halt to socialism. So, too, said the capitalist newspapers: and as late as 1928 Shaw seems to have imagined that the newspapers were correct, that there was a simple return to capitalism, and that the Soviet government had failed to build socialism. This, coinciding with the prospect of a Labour government which its adherents thought would be a gigantic step toward Socialism in Britain induced Shaw to plunge into pre-election propaganda, using his old falconer's lure to bring in the birds for Ramsay Macdonald.

By 1930 the world economic crisis had brought mass unemployment to Britain under the second Labour Government while in the U.S.S.R. with the first Five Year Plan there was by 1930 no unemployment at all. Shaw in summer 1931 set out for the U.S.S.R. and there he spent his seventy-fifth birthday. Previously, at the end of the civil war, a newspaper magnate had asked him to go and describe what there was to see there. Shaw relates:

> I refused because I knew only too well that what I should see was Capitalism in ruins and not Communism *in excelsis*. Not till 1931 did I visit the U.S.S.R.; and by that time the tide had turned.

Shaw went on to say, with his habitual humour and candour:

> For ten days I lived and travelled in perfect comfort (they treated me as if I were Karl Marx himself) and found no such horrors as I could have found in the distressed areas and slums of the Capitalist west, though the Soviet Government was still finding out its mistakes. Fortunately mistakes are not hushed up in Russia: they are attacked and remedied with uncompromising vigour; for there are no Capitalist vested interests to be conciliated.

The visit culminated for the Soviet public in a meeting. Poets, musicians, painters, authors, journalists, playwrights, actors, ballerinas and singers thronged the Dom Soyusov, some of them travelling hundreds of miles for the chance to hear and see Bernard Shaw. A. Lunacharsky, then Commissar for Education and himself a playwright, was Chairman and introduced 'the most brilliant European'. Then once more, the figure which I had first seen when I was a teenager, strode forward to the rostrum, erect, swinging his arms in the old way as he walked, folding them frequently on his bosom as he spoke. Then the famous red beard had become mainly grey: now it was a snowy white. Otherwise what sign of age was there in that perennially youthful man? His speech began with the word in Russian 'Tovarishchi' which met with a round of

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applause, to which Shaw responded 'I have only come to know this word in the last week, but already I have a liking for it'. Later he went on to refer to his travelling companions seated on the platform and conspicuous among them the pink-clad Lady Astor. adorned with a diamond sun-burst:

> Here on the platform are my travelling companions, Lady Astor and the Marquess of Lothian, capitalists and landowners on the largest scale. But that it not their fault. It is the fault of the British proletariat which has not yet followed the Soviet example.

After telling the audience of his conviction that the Communist system could save mankind from complete ruin, he went on to make some criticisms. When he said 'You are making communism into a religion' there was much incredulous laughter. 'Oh', said Shaw, 'I remember when I said the same thing to Frederick Engels, he too laughed as you do'. There was no more laughter. For every man in the audience as though unable to believe his ears turned and whispered to his neighbour. I am prepared to wager that everyone was whispering the same question 'Did he say Engels?' There were quite a number present who could not remember the 1905 revolution, quite a few who had never heard or met Lenin: and even Lenin had never met Engels. The skilled old playwright had achieved a veritable *coup de theatre*: and with a single word had placed himself among the founding fathers of socialism.

On his return to Great Britain Shaw made a speech, the immediate effect of which on two members of the Labour Cabinet is revealed by *Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-32,* published a few weeks ago, as follows:

> August 18, 1931. The Snowdens, who lunched here yesterday, were full of G.B.S.'s speech. 'A wickedly mischievous speech' Philip muttered —whereupon we and they had a hot dispute over Sovietism; they denouncing it as a cruel slave state and we upholding it as a beneficient experiment in organising production and consumption for the common good. It was significant of our completely different outlook on life.

Already Beatrice and Sidney Webb were becoming interested in the building of socialism in the U.S.S.R., more than in the fortunes of the Labour government in which one of them was a member and with which even before its collapse in late August, 1931, they were pretty thoroughly disillusioned. Shaw had blazed the trail for his life-long companion-in-arms Webb, whose talent for social investigation was now to be devoted to the U.S.S.R., to which a lengthy visit was paid. The result was the publication in 1935 of the two-volume *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation* in which the

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skill of the exposition combined with the prestige throughout the British working class movement of its authors to reinforce the effect Shaw had already created.

Thus the three old Fabians, in the approach to the ninth decade of their lives, set themselves to reverse a reformist current they had themselves helped to create nearly fifty years earlier and plunged into the task of popularising the achievements of the U.S.S.R. amongst English-speaking peoples. Shaw and the Webbs, true to the tradition of British empiricism and aversion to theory, did not tangle themselves up in abstract arguments. They came to the Soviet Union and they saw that it was good. Experience teaches. They had the disillusioning experience of the first two Labour governments. They had the heartening experience of the Soviet State and the life of the Soviet people. It was enough for them. At their great age and despite all their previous preconceptions and assumptions, to have reached complete solidarity with the Soviet Union does them the greatest honour. Shaw had passed the test in 1917. Thirty years later, in his ninety-second year, Shaw wrote me a letter in which, discussing Webb and Hyndman, he said:

> The test did not come until the 1914-18 war, when the Soviet backed out at Brest-Litovsk. Hyndman, Jingo at heart, instantly denounced Lenin as the vilest of traitors; but the Webbs stuck to their Marxist guns, and wrote their greatest work in favour of the Soviet system.
>
> (November 5, 1947)

When the Webbs wrote their famous book on Trade Unionism, V. I. Lenin translated it into Russian under the title *Theory and Practice of Trade Unions* in 1898-99, four years after its publication. For the last twenty years of his life Bernard Shaw was not merely in sympathy with the Soviet Union. His support was based on complete conviction. His intense mental activity, almost unexampled in an octogenarian and nonagenarian, his skill in polemic unabated by age, not to speak of his enormous prestige throughout the world, all were used in support of the Soviet Union.

Two months before his fatal accident, on August 6, 1950, he was asked by a newspaper interviewer:

'Are you a Communist, Mr. Shaw?'

His reply was:

'Yes, of course I am. . . . The future is to the country which carries Communism farthest and fastest.'

It would take columns to set down all of Shaw's references in these last twenty years to the Soviet Union, such as his remark in December, 1937:

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Russia is an example to all the world of the enormous superiority of Socialism to Capitalism, economically, socially and politically.

Bernard Shaw, born in Ireland, the oldest colony of the British Empire, lived to witness the disintegration of colonialism with Ireland and India independent republics. Born when the rest of Asia was wholly feudal, he lived to see the peoples of Asia awakening from millenial slumber to political life, and in China advancing towards socialism. Eight years old when the Workingmen's International Association was formed in 1864, he lived through the First International, the Second International and the Third International. He longed to see the world socialist revolution, so that mankind whom he loved as he loved socialism and as he loved truth could be freed for ever from feudalism and capitalism. Himself a pioneer of socialist and communist ideas he rejoiced in the Soviet Union, which had translated ideas and words into deeds. For he would have been the first to say with Goethe

Im Anfang war die Tat.

CONTENTS OF PREVIOUS NUMBERS—1956

JANUARY: *New Worlds for Old* (R.P.D.); *Watch This Washington Visit* (Quæstor); *Not a Penny on the Rent* (P. Piratin); *The Trade that Butler Stops* (J. Eaton); *The Real Americans* (J. Williamson); *Western Values, I* (Sancho Panza); *Bloodless* (W. Gallacher). BOOK REVIEW: *The African Awakening* (B. Davidson); reviewed by R.P.D.

FEBRUARY: *Leadership and Policy in Britain* (R.P.D.); *Cyprus, Greece and N.A.T.O.* (T. Doganis); *Light on Israeli Policy* (S. Mikunis); *Youth Under the Microscope* (P. Allen); *Western Values, II* (Sancho Panza); *The Mantle of McCarthy* (C. Meredith); *Nkrumah and Gold Coast* (I. Cox). BOOK REVIEWS: *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (S. H. Steinberg); *Bees* (I. Khalifman); reviewed by A. Tuckett, I. Montagu. COMMUNICATION: *'Constructive Imperialism'* (B. Davidson).

MARCH: *Crisis and Contrast* (R. Page Arnot); *How to Fight the Tory Offensive* (John Gollan); *Does Labour Deserve Gaitskell?* (James Klugmann); *What Now in France?* (Peter Fryer); *Homes for the People—or Means Test?* (T. Balmer); *The Great Pioneer* (Andrew Rothstein); *The Paris Commune: Marx Family Letters; They Remembered the Commune* (Angela Tuckett).

APRIL: *The Vision Splendid* (R.P.D.); *British Labour and the Soviet Union* (Fred Henderson); *Tom Mann Centenary* (Harry Pollitt); *Engineering* (J. R. Scott); *N.A.T.O.—Fact and Fiction* (Sancho Panza). BOOK REVIEWS: *Peter the First* (A. Tolstoy); *Mozart's Letters* (E. Blom); *Opera in Czechoslovakia* (L. Sip); *The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes; I Speak My Own Piece* (E. G. Flynn); *Labour's Way Forward* (T. Braddock and J. Lawrence); reviewed by C. Hill, W. Paul, D. N. Pritt, Q.C., I. Brown, B.M.B.

MAY: *The Great Debate* (R.P.D.); *We Choose Friendship* (Judith Todd); *The General Strike, 1926* (R. Page Arnot); *After the Communist Congress* (John Gollan); *One of the Mammoths* (J. Carter); *Historical Materialism and the Ancient World* (Joseph Needham, F.R.S.). BOOK REVIEWS: *Those Stormy Years* (George Hardy); *Bryn Roberts and the National Union of Public Employees* (W. W. Craik); *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. IV; Against the Law* (P. Wildeblood); *Christianity and Communism* (Society of Friends); *What are these Soviet Trade Unions?* (British-Soviet Friendship Society); reviewed by Wm. Gallacher, Gordon Schaffer, B. Farrington, D. N. Pritt, Q.C., S. Evans, T. McW.

JUNE: *New Times, New Measures* (R.P.D.); *After the Visit* (Quæstor); *No Automation without Consultation* (R. Birch); *The Devil's Dilemma* (Ivor Montagu); *Constructive Co-existence* (Economista). BOOK REVIEWS: *The Karlsruhe Trial* (Trans. C. P. Dutt); *Looking at China* (Paul Hogarth); reviewed by D. N. Pritt, Q.C., R.T.

JULY: *Thirty-Five Years* (R.P.D.); *Socialism and Civil Liberty* (D. N. Pritt, Q.C.); *Checking the Scales of Justice* (John Elton); *Britain's Shame in Cyprus* (R. Page Arnot); *Curious But Familiar* (Sancho Panza); *The English Revolution, 1640* (V. Lavrovsky and M. Barg); *Effects of Machinery* (Karl Marx); Thirty-Fifth Anniversary: *Messages of Greeting; Morris on Shaw.*

AUGUST: *Breakers Ahead* (R. Page Arnot); *Crisis in Motors* (Peter Kerrigan); *A New Atmosphere* (Camille Huysmans); *Technical Education and the White Paper* (Charles Harrington); *The New 'Socialism'* (Sancho Panza); *Letters from Mrs. Marx; A Toolmaker's Letter* (A. Zaslavsky). BOOK REVIEWS: *The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* (J. Wexley); *George Meredith* (J. Lindsay); *India Today and Tomorrow* (R. Palme Dutt); *Adventures in Bukhara* (L. Solovyev); reviewed by C. Belfrage, Arnold Kettle, D. N. Pritt, Q.C., I.M.

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LETTERS FROM MRS. MARX

[We continue this month the publication of the Marx family letters.—Ed., L.M.]

1, Modena Villas,
Maitland Park.
December 24, 1868.

DEAR MR. KUGELMANN,

You cannot imagine what a great surprise and joy you gave us yesterday and I truly do not know how to thank you for all your friendship and sympathy, and now too for the latest visible sign of your thought for us, the heavenly father Zeus, who now takes the place of the 'Christ child' in our house. Our Christmas festivities this year have again been under a cloud, for my poor husband has been struck down afresh by his old trouble. Once more it has broken out in two places, one of which is considerable and on a painful spot, so that Karl has been forced to lie on his side. We hope to overcome the illness soon, and that in the next letter you will not have to see the hand of . . . the temporary private secretary.

Yesterday evening we were all sitting together in the basement of the house, in what is according to the English arrangement the kitchen sphere, from which come all 'creature comforts' for the upper regions, and were busy preparing the Christmas pudding with the most conscientious thoroughness. We were stoning raisins (a very objectionable, sticky job), cutting almonds, oranges and lemon peel into small pieces, hacking kidney fat to atoms, and kneading the whole mish-mash into a peculiar pot-pourri with eggs and flour, when suddenly there was a ring, a van halted outside the door, there were mysterious steps to and fro, whispering, and a rustling sound was heard in the house. Finally, the announcement came from above: 'A big statue has arrived'. If it had been a cry of 'Fire, fire!' or that the 'Fenians' were there, we could not have rushed upstairs with greater alacrity and confusion.

And there he stood in all his colossal magnificence and ideal purity—the ancient *Jupiter tonans,* intact and undamaged (a small bit of the edge of the pedestal is slightly broken) before our staring, delighted eyes. Meanwhile, after the confusion had somewhat subsided, we read your friendly accompanying letter transmitted through Borkheim, and after we had voiced our cordial thanks to

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you the discussion began about the most worthy site for our 'good God of heaven and earth'. We have not yet reached a conclusion on this great question and many trials will have to be made before the proud bust finds its place of honour.

I also thank you most sincerely for your great interest in Karl's book and your restless efforts in its behalf. It seems the Germans prefer to express their appreciation by silence and complete wordlessness. They have been assiduously helping to give support to all the dawdlers.

Believe me, dear Mr. Kugelmann, seldom has a book been written under more difficult circumstances, and I could indeed write a secret history of it which would reveal numerous, infinitely numerous, cares, anxieties and pains. If the workers had any idea of the sacrifices that had to be made in order to complete this work, which was written solely for them and in their interests, they would perhaps show more interest in it. The Lassalleans[1] appear to have acquired the book most rapidly and to have made a proper muddle of it. But that doesn't matter.

Finally, I have a bone to pick with you. Why do you address me so formally as 'gnädige' ['Madam', literally 'gracious'], when I am such an old veteran, such a hoary head in the movement, such an honourable assistant and companion.

This summer I should have so much liked to visit you and your dear wife and Franzchen, about whom my husband never stops saying good things, and to see Germany once again after 11 years. But I have been ill a good deal during the last year and in the recent period I have unfortunately lost much of my 'faith' and joy in life. It has often been difficult for me to keep on my feet. But as my daughters have made a big journey—they were invited to Lafargue's parents in Bordeaux—I could not make my trip at the same time, and so my beautiful hope has to be a prospect for next year.

Karl sends cordial greetings to you and your wife, in which the girls sincerely join, and I stretch out my hand to you and your dear wife from this far distance.

Your JENNY MARX.

not gnädigste

[1]The followers of Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), the German socialist whom Marx sharply criticised.

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London.
September 15, 1869.

DEAR MR. KUGELMANN,

I would long ago have replied to your friendly lines from Carlsbad, were it not that I have been hoping from day to day to receive more definite news of our dear travellers.[1] Since their first and only letter, from Lüttich, we have lost all trace of them. I believe, however, that after some journeys hither and thither they will now be reaching you this week and so I send you for your joint perusal today's issue of *The Times* and an older one of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The press here has been completely silent about the Congress,[2] except for a very confused rubbishy article of the *Pall Mall* which I enclose. Today *The Times* has broken the ice for the first time with a very favourable, factual and concise article, which is bound to attract considerable attention here and especially in France, on account of the speech of the American delegate.[3] From many turns of phrase, expressions and 'Eccariads' I think I detect the hand of our 'George',[4] if it is at all possible to ascribe so much tact to him. In the meantime a whole arsenal of newspapers and letters has accumulated here, and I really do not know if they are worth the trouble and cost of transport across the sea. Their contents are now mostly antiquated. Lessner[5] wrote three very nice, full reports on the Congress and Liebknecht[6] two wishy-washy letters that were better left unread. Eccarius reports the curious fact, imparted to him by an American, who claims to have heard it from Mr. Slack, the correspondent of the *New York Tribune,* in London, that 'Bright[7] has written to the editors of all London newspapers requesting them not to give any reports of our proceedings'. This would to some extent explain the silence of the press. If *The Times* publishes some reports, then the other leading sheep will follow and so the success of the Congress will be assured. At any rate it will have better results than the Eisenach Congress,[8] whose only effect seems to have been to help 'our great master Ferdinand'[9] to reach, besides his official Monitor in *Social-Demokraten,* also a second semi-official Liebknecht sheet. Even in Basle attempts are being made to thrust the miserable Schweitzer[10] scandal into the forefront so that one might be induced to believe that the International has no other mission than that of *internationalising* the principles of the 'brazen one' minus the *rigid organisation.*

Some private letters of interest I shall send to Hanover as soon as I hear that our dear 'wanderers' have reached you. Laura with

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her husband and darling little boy have now been with us for exactly four weeks and are beginning to prepare for the return to Paris. Unfortunately, mother and son are not as well as I could have wished. The dear little fellow suffers from his first teeth coming through with all the usual symptoms. His tiny, friendly face has become so thin and small and his bright eyes look twice as big in the pale, little face. He is such a happy, gentle little fellow and we shall miss the little monkey very much.

My best regards to your dear wife, give Franzchen a kiss, and with the most friendly greetings from

Your JENNY MARX.

[1]Karl Marx and his daughter Jenny went to Germany in September, 1869, and visited also Kugelmann.

[2]The Basle Congress of the International Workingmen's Association held September, 1869.

[3]A. C. Cameron, American trade union leader and editor of the Chicago Working Man's Advocate.

[4]George Eccarius. German worker, tailor, secretary for many years of the International. After the Hague Congress of 1872 broke with Marx.

[5]Frederich Lessner (1825-1910). German worker, tailor, close friend of Marx. Very active member of the General Council of the International.

[6]Wilhelm Liebknecht (1825-1900). Famous German leader of Social Democrats, close friend of Marx and Engels.

[7]John Bright (1811-1889). Famous Liberal Statesman and member of Parliament.

[8]The Congress of German Socialists in August, 1869.

[9]Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864). German Socialist, whom Marx criticised sharply for his flirtations with Bismarck.

[10]Schweitzer, J. B. (1833-1875), after Lassalle's death headed General Association of German Workers.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

BOOKS

Selected Philosophical Essays, by N. A. Dobrolyubov. (660 pp. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow; Central Books, London. 11s.)
Was Justice Done? The Rosenberg-Sobell Case, by Malcolm P. Sharp. (216 pp. Monthly Review Press, New York. $3.50.)
Recollections from Childhood, by Ion Creanga. (124 pp. Lawrence & Wishart. 9s. 6d.)
The Story of Lola Gregg, by Howard Fast. Blue Heron Press. 220 pp. $3.00.
The Enemy Forgotten, by Gilbert Green. International Publishers, New York. 320 pp. $2.50.
The Summer King, by Aylmer Vallance. Thames & Hudson. 200 pp. 16s.
Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-1932. Longmans Green. 328 pp. 25s.
Studies in the Labour Theory of Value, by Ronald Meek. Lawrence & Wishart. 310 pp. 30s.
Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. II, by Joseph Needham, F.R.S. Cambridge University Press. 698 pp. 80s.
Economic Problems of the Church, by Christopher Hill. Oxford University Press. 368 pp. 42s.

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how exceedingly satisfied I am with his conduct.' What pleased Her Majesty so much with this timid little mayor? From the cover of the hotel he had read the Riot Act and ordered the troops to fire. Which they did, killing twenty and injuring some fifty of his fellow Welshmen. That is our first and last glimpse of the modest little knight; but John Frost died in 1877 at the age of 96. He had been a boy during the French Revolution; he was in advanced age at the time of the Paris Commune; and he had lived through times of mighty struggles of the British working class. It was a long road. Let Ernest Jones sum up: 'Had it not been for Chartism—for the fear of *Chartist pikes*—for the fear of Chartist plug-drawing—for the fear of an armed, terrible Chartist insurrection—not a trades union would have existed now in England; every strike would have been treason—every combination and labour-subscription a conspiracy'.

Yes, the Press Lords may well tremble to see the young trade unionist today steeped in the arguments and traditions of his Chartist forefathers, and now possessed of the powerful organisations which those struggles made it possible to build. Many Chartist arguments applied to very different circumstances; but their range was great, from discussion of the relation between industrial and political action, of the function of leadership, of allies for the movement, as to when 'moral persuasion' or 'physical force' becomes necessary, to even whether a political party was needed at all.

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Sometimes the moment comes for pausing to take a long view of the road we have come, to see better the way we should go. Next month we shall reurn to the present here-and-now.

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